

UTOPIA AND NEW ATLANTIS, UTOPIA REVISED

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Abstract. This paper is a comparison between two works usually ascribed to the utopian genre: Thomas More's *Utopia*, and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*. My major claim is that the two differ mainly in this respect: if More's work is utopian, Bacon's *New Atlantis* is only disguised under the clothing of utopian thought. Although Bacon has clearly an ideal of education in mind, through a number of features he completely departs from utopian educational programs.

Keywords: Utopia, society, Baconian, knowledge, control

Introduction

In this paper I am going to show that Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* is not a specimen of the utopian genre. In order to do this I will compare the Baconian text to Thomas More's *Utopia*, a token of the genre. In consequence, the present paper will suggest that Francis Bacon has opted for a fictional wrapping to bring forward a thoroughly attainable project, later to be implemented by the Royal Society. A comparison of Bacon's text with More's *Utopia* might be a good strategy to boost the view that *New Atlantis* has only little in common - like the broad scope of reform, for instance - with the utopian genre that More has brought to life.

If we judge by appearances, *Utopia* and *New Atlantis* seem very alike: two writings carved out of travel literature, using voyage as an introduction to a depiction of the perfect commonwealth. Yet, an analysis of their content and their symbolism discourages such a view and convinces the reader of the different messages the two writings transmit. The following pages will be dedicated to the decryption of these messages and their implication in relation to the utopian genre. The present paper does not intend to clarify what has troubled scholars for decades - the exact intentions of the writers and their own view of what their papers should determine in their readers¹ - but represents instead only a comparison.

A hundred years after Thomas More ushers in the new literary genre of *Utopia*, Francis Bacon writes his *New Atlantis*. In the text, Bacon seems to combine the genres of scientific treatise and utopia alongside a renaissance tradition of mixed models.² This writing style was later on followed by Margaret Cavendish.³ She

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decided to respond to Hooke's *Micrographia*, by writing a work similar in style to Bacon's more scientific oriented approach. *New Atlantis* was as a model for the seventeenth and eighteenth century European Academies, as the formal histories of the learned societies and their charters attest.⁴ Of all the early attempts to build a self-conscious group of natural philosophers of a Baconian type, the Royal Society seemed to fit best into the description of the ideal scientific society that Bacon described in the *New Atlantis*. But if this is the case, his utopian writing would seem less utopian than expected as the Royal Society's progressive scientific knowledge does not fit into the definition of utopia at all. Also, compared with the ironic account of Morean perfect-thought society, Francis Bacon's ambitions of reformation seem not just significantly modest but also deeply rooted into a particular account of human nature. And these are exactly the essential elements that this comparison will insist upon in an attempt to underline the distinctive features of the texts proposed.

My argument will use larger or smaller fragments of the texts which, I believe, could clarify the structural differences between the two works. Bacon's work has both an open ending whereas More's *Utopia* is finished. Moreover, whereas More's work presents a detailed description of a social organization, Bacon's text focuses less on the politics of the society and more on a particular aspect of the societal organization, the scientific community. It must also be mentioned that, since *New Atlantis* was unfinished, there have been some attempts to continue it. This observation is highly significant since the abrupt, unfinished ending of the book might be a sign of the author's intention. However, even without presumptions regarding Bacon's aims, the lack of ending or continuation focuses the attention of the reader on the actual text that Bacon has left and on what of it is indeed significant for the scope of the work. I think that even if Bacon may have intended to complete the work by describing a perfect Commonwealth like William Rawley suggested, it remains doubtful whether Bacon followed this strain of thought to its end and was instead averted by lack of time from its fulfillment. Rather, he may have focused on the central figure in his work - Solomon's House - as scientific practice devoid of political color, possible to be pursued in any sort of political setting - as pointed out by David Colclough.⁵

The contradiction between *Utopia* and the attainability of Bacon's proposed project will often recur in the text. It is important therefore to explain that, Utopia is considered to be a systematic solution to man's misfortune - Utopus is extremely well characterized by Davis primarily as a system builder⁶ - embodied in thorough change of tradition, customs and societal structure. Bacon's plan of reforming knowledge is centered on a systematization of knowledge and only secondarily leads to a reformation of societal habits. That's why Bacon's scientific society model presented in the *New Atlantis* appears susceptible to utopian interpretation,⁷ perspective that this paper attempts to challenge.

This essay will try, first, to delimit - without aiming at a rigid definition - the fundamental particularities of the fictional writing, grounding its assortment of characteristics in Davis's account of utopianism,⁸ Goodwin and Taylor's definition⁹ of the genre, as appertaining to the field of political thought and to the broad analysis of Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel.¹⁰

What is a *Utopia*? Its Morean legacy

According to Quentin Skinner, what Thomas More had done in the early 1520s was to deal with a standard subject of debate in the Renaissance era: the question regarding the elements that constitute the best state of the commonwealth.¹¹ Comparing More's work to the literary genres of the educational treatises developed by the heirs of the quattrocento humanists, the mirror-for-princes genre and advice books to which the work of More is deeply connected as Skinner¹² and Davis¹³ highlight, *Utopia* is concerned not only with the way the leaders of the society should exercise a virtuous government upon their subjects, but, moreover, with the way the commonwealth could be generally reformed. What is indeed significant about the work *Utopia*, as an expression of utopianism, is that it challenges the Christian humanists' project of reform from within. Moral renewal solely is simply not enough a cure to transform a corrupt society into a virtuous one. That is why, building on the renaissance exercise of fusing scholastic and humanist quests for an institutional context of virtue, the utopia - embodied in More's work - reveals the appropriate institutions which manage to correctly impose virtue upon the people. Thus, the problem of social morality becomes the central issue of utopianism.¹⁴ This, however, is not the case in Bacon's *New Atlantis*. Bacon's science undermines utopia, as I will try to demonstrate in the second part of the paper, which I dedicate to Bacon's vision of reform.

There is no dissension as to whether More has been influenced by Plato's political philosophy and his view on the perfect commonwealth, the philosopher's city. Nevertheless, More's Utopus - the good king who built the city - manages to govern it justly without any help from abstract philosophy.¹⁵ Moreover, More distances himself from Plato, both in the first and the second Book of *Utopia*, through the instauration of complete equality of property and the setting up of an intricate hierarchy of pleasures which, according to the Manuels, offer insight into the Christian humanism that might have influenced More.¹⁶

According to Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor,¹⁷ his description includes, as a form of political theory, several devices, like perfect justice and ideal liberty that construct this new form of representing political thought. These devices work like the invocation of an ideal, which serves to transcend present reality and point to a possible better future, evaluating present imperfections in the light of that ideal. The methodological problems that arise when trying to compare absolute ideas with present reality are solved in the writing of More by

. . . the imaginary of a creation of a constructive Utopia . . . which supplies an alternative model of society in which numerous ideas are simultaneously and harmoniously realized and from which can be derived principles of evaluation detached from present reality, by which present institutions can be judged.¹⁸

More's *Utopia* can be, therefore, placed into the genre of utopias, as selected and organized by Goodwin and Taylor, because it resembles a set of fictional writings that offer constructive criticism of the present via an ideal alternative.

Next, on the basis of the elements highlighted above, I will limit myself for the moment to tracing a broad description of what has been called a utopian writing. In the same volume, Goodwin and Taylor hint on an ample definition of utopia which sums up all the characteristics already mentioned, and which:

denote an elaborate vision of the good life in a perfect society which is viewed as an integrated totality: such a vision transcends normal idealism and is inevitably at variance with the imperfections of existing society and so, per se, constitutes a critique of social institutions.¹⁹

How do *Utopia* and *New Atlantis* fit into this general description and what do they have to say about the characteristics of a utopian writing?

One work - several wrappings

After being published for the first time in Latin in Louvain (1516), several other Latin editions²⁰ followed which, in comparison with the vernacular versions can be considered “more conservative and stable.” They preserve fragments of the original paratextual apparatus, without lacking titles, authorizations and marginal notes. In the context of the political and religious upheavals in Europe, at times, editors, concerned with gratifying political or clerical authorities, were adapting More's representations of his ‘personality’ to fit the political and religious beliefs. As such, More was portrayed as a catholic martyr, at times “England's distinguished jewel,”²¹ sometimes wearing just the title he had when he wrote *Utopia*²² or only “a simple citizen of London.” Even more, once *Utopia* started appearing in vernacular, its protean character facilitated the adaptation of the text to the aim of the edition. “In the vernacular versions of *Utopia* . . . the name *More* and the cluster of features attached to it have above all the function of sign advertising the character of the book.”²³ And *Utopia* not only managed to adopt to different contexts (Terence Cave successfully managed to bring together for analysis all substantive paratexts of the extant translations of *Utopia* printed between 1524 and 1643) but More has been constantly invoked ever since by most political thinkers trying to make their point.

In the following part of my paper, my aim is to show, disregarding the author's position in relation to the text, that More's *Utopia*, with its aim of perfect

totality and systematic renewal from above, fits the utopian paradigm. I think that one could only suggest and not definitely decode More's intentions, while Bacon's *New Atlantis* - treated in the second section - offers more room for interpreting what the author's intentions might have been.

In the following passages, I will show that More's ideal commonwealth works according to properly enforced laws and envisages a particular sort of outward educational process which appeals to the rationality of the human nature and rests on a particular account of sin. I will take into consideration fragments of More's text that highlight the important role of the institutions in charge of the inculcation of precise values and the need of control to be carried out by them to assure order and harmony. I will show at the end of this discussion that Utopia is an ideal state in the sense that its civil laws are perfect and that they are considered to be so for their successful assailing of the human vices as long as they are constantly inflicted on the citizens.

Reform from above: an external appeal to rationality

Thomas More draws attention in his book to the two characteristics of utopian writing highlighted above. First we have the critique to an existing state of affairs in Book One of his work – Hythloday, the "nonsense-speaker," an explorer of political forms and ideas, rather than of places. The critique stresses the biases of the English judicial system. Second, a counterexample is given to us in Book II, a better society where the evils of the former disappear. More's construction, as we shall see, presents all the features of outlined definition.

The cause of all injustice in More's England is identified in the first Book. Hythloday, "a man of quite advanced years, with a sunburned face, a long beard and a cloak hanging loosely from his shoulders" who had traveled with Amerigo Vespucci and a wise knower of various countries and people, states his opinion on the usefulness of wise counselors in a king's council and expresses his position toward the unexpected growth of criminality in England. The problem of ensuring the fact that kings receive appropriate advice from their counselors²⁴ is a common topic of humanist literature. In addition, the clash of two distinct Renaissance perspectives on the role of the scholar in a well-governed commonwealth is introduced. Thus, the view of the philosopher thoroughly dedicated to the pursuit of truth and completely separated from political affairs was opposed by an alternative position of the "civic humanism," according to which it would be unwise and unsafe to entrust our lives to others by not assuming an active role in the society.²⁵ Hythloday presents himself as a defender of the former position. He regards the court-life as a life of compromise, hypocrisy and lies and opts for the freedom of living as he pleases. The sailor introduces the discussion on theft and English laws by observing the way men would think their "whole reputation endangered." They would look like simpletons if someone advised them by using something he had "read of in other ages or seen in practice elsewhere." The sailor

remembers that he had encountered such “proud, obstinate, ridiculous judgements,”²⁶ once in England. At that time Hythloday tried to expose various arguments against the way the English law punishes thieves after allowing the idle nobility to rob them of the only chance to survive, either by their enclosures or by dismissal of large numbers of idle servants. While his proposal for the diminishing of the punishment is taken up by his audience with hostility, he is applauded by the same people only after the Cardinal, as one of their important authorities of the day, embraces Hythloday’s views.²⁷ The discussion mentioned in Book One has an important bearing on the scope of the entire writing. It shows what the following Book aims at improving and what the principal cause of all evil that leads to such great injustice consists of. The corruption of court life, the poverty of the simple people, their despair and the high rate of criminality all are caused by the legal indulgence of one “prime plague” and the worst of the human vices: pride.

It seems, then, that More presents in Book One an image of a malfunctioning commonwealth whose disease consists in the wrong guidance of the human nature, which means letting false pleasures, false values and wicked desires govern rationality, true virtues and true values. *Utopia*, by contrast, is presented to be a place where there is no poverty, no lack of useful things, no exposition of false values like deceiving riches and no injustice caused by uneven distribution of goods.

Are the Utopians different from all other human beings? Have they been blessed with higher qualities than other human beings? On the contrary, the Utopians have not received any religious revelation, they have not been Christianized and Christian religious learning is anything but familiar to them. Thus, they are pagan: “there are different forms of religion not only throughout the island but even within their individual cities” although, “the vast majority, and those by far the wisest ones. . . believe in a single divinity, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, beyond the grasp of the human mind, and diffused throughout the universe, not physically, but by influence.”²⁸ How is it then possible for people who have not heard of Christ and of the Christian virtues to offer an example of social order and social interaction? It becomes clear that More is siding with the tradition of discourse about social idealization that stresses individual moral effort rather than the opposite device of millennial coup de grace.²⁹ But whether moral effort represents what we would call a continuous personal struggle with sin that comes out of our own acknowledgement of evil still remains to be settled.

First we find out that king Utopus who had conquered the Utopians almost 2000 years earlier had turned the peninsula into an island by cutting the channel that bound it with the continent, isolating it from the rest of the world. Isolation, as Davis stresses, “was one recourse against *fortuna* as opposed to directed moral action,” “but watchfulness, discipline and control was also necessary” in the eliminating the obstacles to the achievement of the ideal society.³⁰ The leveling of conditions and options is the first step taken by the wise king in the *re-education* of his people. That’s why he made them build “fifty-four cities entirely identical in

language, customs, institutions and laws,”³¹ identical in what their architecture and their construction regards, the insides of which the utopian people exchange every ten years and which have “double doors which open easily” and “let anyone come in – so there is nothing private anywhere.”³² Thus, isolation represents the prerequisite of instituting a new social order which would sweep away all pride-nourishing circumstances- especially self-interest. As self-interest stems from private property, the latter must be replaced by exclusively common possessions which would then put individuals to work for the common good. Thus, private property is considered to be the root of all evil and therefore the cause of sin.

Reviving Platonic communism, More tries to offer a solution to the problem posed by the polarization good citizen/good man rooted in Machiavelli’s writings.³³ This is why he overlaps the civic duties with the individual virtue suggesting that the best form of society is the one consisting of citizens continuously preoccupied with the welfare of the public sphere. Thus we can appreciate the specific attention given to their gardens, the cities’ fields and the dedication given to their various crafts which prove useful and profitable to all inhabitants of Utopia. All the activities of the Utopians seem oriented towards maximizing the utility, suggesting the rational presupposed nature of the individual. The interest for agriculture is one such example. Even the dress code is restricted to utility.

Because their social life is “well ordered and the commonwealth properly established,” the Utopians do not have to worry about any shortage in essential things like food. In a commonwealth where every adult complies with the fixed working hours, there is no reason to “fear that anyone will claim more than they need.”

“Fear of want, no doubt, makes every living creature greedy and rapacious, and man, besides, develops these qualities out of sheer pride, which glories in getting ahead of others by a superfluous display of possessions. But this sort of vice has no place whatever in the Utopian scheme of things.”³⁴

Not because the Utopians have completely discarded their sinful nature, but because their institutional setting and legislation are continuously regulating their social interaction. Permanent surveillance is a daily fact, although free time is left to every person’s individual discretion, provided that free time “is not wasted in roistering or sloth”³⁵ but used properly for the general improvement of the mind and society.

The Utopians secure all this virtuous and undisturbed way of living through their engagement in promoting the true virtues and pleasures. The Utopians define virtue as living according to nature. This might be explained by the fact that More’s view of the nature of man had been deeply influenced by that of Giovanni Picco de la Mirandola whom he popularized in early sixteenth-century England. For de la

Mirandola, man had the potential to become what form of life he desired to be in the sense that he could sink to the level of an animal or rise to the heights of a god.³⁶ This view on the indeterminate ontological status of man is taken up by More and presented as a principle of self-perfection of man through his own rationality and his excellent moral capacity. The English humanist transfers upon Utopia the “social ideal in which fallible human beings live in a society of moral dignity and worth without the aid of revelation and that, moreover such an ideal cannot be arrived at only by moral effort in a curial context or even by the legislative effort;”³⁷ it needs a fierce enforcement of strictly regulated laws. Social morality is rational in Utopia; everything that serves the common good is rational to be pursued and man’s nature seems political, in the Aristotelian sense.

Moreover, since everyone has a single path to follow and some fixed rules to obey, the “state” is a continuous presence that “dogs” its subjects, be it under the yoke of control, tight discipline and circumscription of choice. This seems to be the only way to fight man’s sinful nature, as one cannot thoroughly escape it. So, even if More reinforces the idea of rational freedom, the “cage of humanity” can never be escaped. Still, the Utopians are taken to live a much more virtuous life than the decadent high-ranked circles of the late middle Ages. Convinced that the highest form of virtuous living is possible because human beings are able to obey the dictates of reason, the Utopians manage to live in the manner that Christians do without actually being Christians.³⁸ Like the heathens, they live their lives pursuing reasonable pleasure and felicity. In Epicurean tradition, they distinguish several classes of pleasure and seek primarily, among them those of the mind, prizing them most highly.³⁹

Still, pride remains “too deeply fixed in human nature to be easily plucked out.”⁴⁰ This is why Utopia had to embody a society endowed with an appropriate institutional, legal and educational apparatus to guide flawed men into a proper social practice. More striking than the fact that their night pots were made of gold is the fact that, as Davis emphasizes “all acts and relationships were subject to control, all were public, none private.”⁴¹ Utopia swept everything into its totality. And that is what Utopia is all about: an ideal image of an organized everything continuously subjected to a leviathanic bureaucracy. That’s why Utopia might not be about men’s own renewing power at all since it does not help them become better but instead eradicates their entire inner structure by inflicting institutional control upon them. Imagining all the elements of a society that would contrast thoroughly with his contemporary world (communism, heathenism) More offers a highly improbable alternative to it. In the end, More himself seems unconvinced of the possibility of such a thorough reform of thought. It seems that even for him Utopia is too utopian. His criticism of the English society and commonwealth is nevertheless pointed and acute and *Utopia* is its most strenuous manifestation.

Whereas More seemed to strongly believe in man’s own capacity to “reform” one’s moral behavior in an appropriate institutional setting and to determine

himself to restrain his actions only to virtuous practice that presumably corrects the sinful nature, Bacon is convinced that man's moral capacity to regain the prelapsarian condition has been deeply and irremediable compromised by the Fall.

***New Atlantis*: a programmatic fable**

The problem conducting the following section of this paper tries to give an answer to the good question posed by Frank and Fritzie Manuel: "What is Francis Bacon doing among the Utopian prophets?"⁴² The strategy is to present a similar answer, by analyzing the text on view of what was said about More's work. My intent is to also argue that the program of the *New Atlantis* is attainable and worth looking at for the naturalists who adopted the 'New Philosophy of Nature' that Bacon is promoting in his lengthy philosophical writings. Setting it against More's *Utopia* and the structural elements of the Morean society, it may become clear not only that Bacon is criticizing More but also that his aim is quite different. Using different accounts from the literature, I will show that Bacon wrote in the form of a fable about a model of a knowledge based society. Thus, his account of the perfect society is an image of a less than perfect scientific program, whose fruits could be appropriately grasped only by people whose morals have been formed in a Christian spirit. Although I do not discuss the various religious motifs which are embedded in Bacon's work, I agree with Manuels' assertion that "when the eighteen-century philosophers abstracted the Baconian method and plan from his profoundly religious context, they were doing violence to the spirit of the work."⁴³

New Atlantis is published after Bacon's death, at the end of a bulky volume, *Sylva Sylvarum*, which was supposed to embody the third part of Bacon's 'Great Instauration of Knowledge': a collection of data, observations and experiments which would then be worked upon with the aid of the right method (which had thereafter never been actually written).⁴⁴ William Rawley, Bacon's chaplain and his literary executor added to it the following prefatory note:

This fable my Lord devised, to the end that he might exhibit therein a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvelous works for the benefit of men, under the name of Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Works. And even so far his Lordship hath proceeded, as to finish that part . . . His Lordship thought also in this present fable to have composed a frame of Laws, or the best state or mould of a Commonwealth; but foreseeing it would be a long work, his desire of collecting the Natural History diverted him, which he preferred many degrees before it.⁴⁵

We have many reasons to believe that Bacon might have been very interested in appropriate laws and in improving the nature of the Commonwealth not only because he was a controversial figure but also because he was a humanist

engaged in marrying ethical and civic activities. Despite the fact that the *vita contemplativa* was embraced by Bacon after his disgrace⁴⁶ - when he was charged with twenty-three separated counts of corruption and was declared incapable of holding any other future offices - and the fact that writing natural histories had been his principal focus after 1621, Bacon also wrote the *History of the Reign of Henry the Seventh*. This piece of work emphasized Bacon's conviction that the best government would be the one taken up by the learned.⁴⁷ In *The Advancement of Learning*, Book I he quotes past episodes reminding of the fruitful union of learning and statesmanship:

In this emperor's time (Marcus Aurelius Antonius) also the church for the most part was in peace' (Bacon could be hinting at the great religious schism caused by the Reformation but also at the various sects Anglicanism had brought forth); 'so as in the sequence of six princes we do see the blessed effects of learning in sovereignty, painted forth in the greatest table of the world.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that Francis Bacon was trying to solve the same conflict that preoccupied Thomas More between the contemplative and active nature of a man's life; a conflict absorbed from the humanist debate. Bacon's pledge for experimental philosophy and his continuous effort of bringing learned men's understanding around seem to offer a kind of solution to the tension. On the contrary, More only seems to augment the problem through presenting two different positions, Hythloday's and his own. To Bacon, knowledge is power and *New Atlantis* is precisely a manifestation of this conviction.

New Atlantis – a purifying from within with the aid of faith

The beginning of Bacon's fable closely resembles More's Utopia on several aspects: the isolated unknown island, the appeal to the traditional myth of the discovery and the invocation of Plato's myth *Atlantis*. But this sets the end to similarities, since the first contact which the sailors established with the island's inhabitants reveals to them the deep Christian allegiance which governs the islanders' attitude and actions, including their behavior towards the strangers.

The first contact between the European sailors and the people of Bensalem is strongly marked by this Christian allegiance:

. . . stood up, and with a loud voice in Spanish asked: Are ye Christians? We answered. We were . . . At which answer the said person lifted his right hand towards heaven, and drew it softly to his mouth, and then said: If ye swear by the merits of the Saviour that ye are no pirates, nor have shed blood lawfully nor unlawfully within forty days past, you may have licence to come on land.⁴⁹

Relieved by such thoroughly assumed Christianity, the sailors listen and comply with the advice and guidance received from the islands' inhabitants. Then, they are guided to Bensalem (the island's name, meaning "The Brothers of Peace") and to the Strangers' House where they are told to stay for three full days to rest and recover from the diseases some of the sailors had caught on sea. Three days later, the governor visits them willing to speak to six of them and elucidate "who was the apostle of that nation, and how it was converted to faith."⁵⁰ Then, we are told the story of the conversion of Bensalem. The conversion to Christianity of the Bensalemites was done by direct divine intervention⁵¹ about twenty years after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, a time when the minds of the people were still nourished by the apostolic tenets and not yet embroiled by error and misinterpretation which occur with the passage of time.⁵²

Marriage is a sacred institution and the family has its own ceremony dedicated to those men who have over thirty children or grandchildren. Up to now it resembles its Morean counterpart. The inhabitants' mind is pure and uncorrupted and allows them to behave virtuously and to closely follow the Christian precepts, a virtuous nature that allowed for God's revelation in the first place, thanks to King Solomona⁵³ who isolated his nation and created Solomon's House to "find out the true nature of all things (whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them and men the more fruit in the use of them)."⁵⁴ This is where we reckon the particular statute of the Bensalemites in comparison to their European tallies. Thus, we know that the virtuous and pious people of Bensalem are the more blissful and devoid of worries or pain by having amidst them the "noblest foundation that was upon earth and the lanthorn of this kingdom (...) dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God."⁵⁵ This is how Bacon manages to unite knowledge and faith, warning, as a clear reaction against More's pagan virtuosi, that humanity cannot gain the benefits from nature without proper piety.

The relation the Bensalemites establish with the search for knowledge separates the chosen ones from the vulgar and introduces, hence, a social cleavage. On the one hand, there are the members of Solomon's House, whose lives are dedicated to discoveries and innovations, and on the other hand, there are the people that rejoice over the fruits of the formers' natural inquiries. In comparison to More's egalitarian society, Bacon portrays a less fully integrated society, one in which a class of untouchables exists.

The inhabitants of Bensalem, as a community of virtuous people living in peace and harmony completely, embrace the Christian faith. Still, they are not supposed to reach moral perfectness, a feature inherent in the nature of the Utopians. Resting on a mixture of Pelagian and Mirandollian accounts of human nature, More's man is thoroughly capable, provided that he is surrounded by appropriate institutions to guide his way, of achieving moral perfectness on his own, without any help of Revelation,⁵⁶ On the contrary, the description of the island of Bensalem, includes no information about basic characteristics of its inhabitants. We

are not told if they act as deeply rational human beings and conduct themselves by principles of common-sense or utility as we have seen that the utopians do or what kind of legal regulations sanction their behavior. What distinguishes Bensalemites from Europeans is their much better moral condition. As Macauley has pointed out, the inhabitants of Bensalem behave with chastity and innocence, marriage being regarded as the most sacred of all institutions. The text informs us that the Bensalemites value greatly the family values and that they are generally hospitable people. They are helped in their tasks by the Fellows of Solomon, whose scientific practice eases the lives of the citizens.⁵⁷

However, Bacon does not grant the individual the capacity of achieving moral faultlessness. The central focus of the following paragraphs will be to argue that Bacon considered the Fall to be the result of a moral and not of a cognitive decay. Although a distinction is established between those who can achieve insight into nature and those that cannot, Bacon does not transform the chosen society of scientific fellows into a divine society of angels. Their fallible nature is hinted at in the text itself in a passage where the Father of Solomon's House speaks about the House of Deceits. The Fall, as John Channing Briggs insists, was the result in man's moral knowledge, not his capacity to know nature:⁵⁸

it was not the pure knowledge of nature and universality, a knowledge by the light whereof man did give names unto other creatures in Paradise, as they were brought before him, according unto their properties, which gave the occasion to the Fall; but it was the proud knowledge of good and evil, with an intent in man to give law unto himself and to depend no more on God's commandments which was the form of the temptation.⁵⁹

The only chance left to man in approaching God was to decipher the signatures of the divine mind in nature. This is how natural philosophy relates to religion - as a subordinate, yet powerfully complementary instrument.⁶⁰ But we can tell that the sinfulness of human nature does not spare the Fellows of the House of Six Days either. As Davis correctly observes, there is a laboratory among the many Houses dedicated to research in Solomon's House, called House of Deceits which helps the fellows beware of charlatans and conjurers who encroach upon genuine science by understanding their tricks:

But we do hate all impostures and lies, insomuch as we have severely forbidden it to all our fellows, under pain of ignominy and fines, that they do not show any natural work or thing adorned or swelling, but only pure as it is, and without all affectation of strangeness.⁶¹

Although there are few laws outlined by Bacon and put to work in the construction of Bensalem's internal functioning they are highly restrictive. Such

example of restriction is the isolationist character of the island. Another one is the fact that the inhabitants, except for a few of them, have travel restrictions.

The piety of Bensalem's citizens serves to highlight the disparity between Bensalem and the House of Solomon. We are told that the Bensalemites live in accordance with the Word of Christ and that they are to remain in the shadow of the Brothers because they are not allowed to travel and improve their knowledge, but instead have to remain virtuous and faithful. Besides, we know that Bacon's definition of knowledge is power and that, as it was shown power can fall in the hands of the "unworthy." That is why the person of the private citizen of any commonwealth seems to be advised by Bacon to remain pious since he cannot reach the light of knowledge.

Secrecy is another aspect underlying the idea that knowledge should be handled with care. As McCauley observes, the secrecy characterizing the work of Salomon's House raises the question of whether the character of the ideal institution could still be inferred as there is only meager communication with the simple people who are rather held back from the natural knowledge and just enjoy the benefits of the fellows' research. He identifies in the allegiance of secrecy Bacon's attempt to resolve the paradox of scientific utopia.⁶² I would only agree with Sargent's suggestion that secrecy appears to be a necessary consequence of any cooperative project.⁶³ Inside the virtuous society, the members of Salomon's House form a powerful and privileged social class. From the Father of Salomon's House the chosen sailor finds out that they decide in 'consultations' among themselves "which of the inventions and experiences which they have discovered should be published and which not; and take all an oath of secrecy, for the concealing of those which we think fit to keep secret: though some of those we do reveal sometimes to the state, and some not."⁶⁴

Bacon does not explain in his fable how the Fellows of Salomon's House had managed to find the appropriate way to do science, as he did not have the chance to write an explicit treatise of method. To the following question Bacon gave sparse and metaphorical answers: What are the natural philosophers supposed to do to gain knowledge? In his *Novum Organum* Bacon suggests that to enter the path of science one has to have the mind resembling children's minds, whose lack of vanity gives them privileged access to the kingdom of heaven.⁶⁵ It seems that not everyone can be a natural philosopher. In *Temporis Partus Masculus* says:

when all the approaches and entrances to men's minds are beset and blocked by the most obscure idols-idols deeply implanted and, as it were burned in –that any clean and polished surface remains in the mirror of the mind on which the genuine natural light of things can fall? . . . Nor, even if you wished to do so, could you rid yourself of idols by simply taking my advice without familiarizing yourself with nature. On waxen tablets you

cannot write anything new until you rub out the old. With the mind it is not so; there you cannot rub out the old until you have written in the new.⁶⁶

Bacon's account of a continuously self-improving scientific knowledge, which he illustrates in the detailed description of the scientific achievements of the naturalists of Salomon's House,⁶⁷ dismisses any image of a closed and perfect society whether socio-political or scientific. Perfect human beings do not need any progress whatsoever. But that is precisely what continuous inquiry into nature is about. What is more, there is no guarantee that deceit and counterfeit can be banished from human minds.⁶⁸ Nevertheless a virtuous life - convenient to the Christian precepts - and a sustained fight against various preconceptions destined to blur the mind can get one nearer to nature and thus to the divine will irrespective of the social-political background.

Contrasting the definition constructed above with the participation and illustration of the various elements in More's *Utopia*, the ethical and political arrangements of the island, that Bacon imagines, dazzle the reader by their absence. As David Colclough rightly recalls,

While in More's work Hythloday offers a detailed description of Utopia's geography, government and laws, the moral philosophy of the inhabitants and their domestic or economic arrangements, and while the island narrative of Book II is used as an example of a specific moral and political argument (that private property should be abolished), readers of the *New Atlantis* remain ignorant of most of these aspects of Bensalem.⁶⁹

As I said earlier, it might be the case that Bacon wanted to concentrate on the aspect of achieving, maintaining and improving knowledge. In consequence, one cannot find in the *New Atlantis* any explicitly exposed institutional coercion or any sort of bureaucratic organization of the social life because they are of no interest to Bacon's central point. It should be clear by now that the *New Atlantis* does not integrate the model of a perfect society as More does. Thus, in this context, David Colclough's remark is a welcome conclusion to the problem of the absence of political and ethical concerns in Bacon's work. Colclough states the following:

The ethical and political 'he says, 'both in terms of the detailed description of an ideal commonwealth and of recommended codes of conduct are absent partly because Bacon is offering a model of the use of knowledge and reading for any society (even if most specifically seventeenth-century England) rather than a model of a new perfect society.⁷⁰

To answer the question addressed by Frank and Fritzie Manuel set at the beginning of this section, several readers might have interpreted Bacon's model as a

utopia falling into the category of the constructive criticism of the present via an ideal alternative (future or present).⁷¹ And there is nothing erroneous to seeing Bacon's work as an attempt to offer an alternative to a flawed system of knowledge which of course concerns the whole community who adopts it. What I cannot accept is the assumption that Bacon's imagined society represents a static and closed state of affairs resembling perfectness and resenting improvement. Such a view would rob of the work its most important message - the hope and success of attainability of its project - through the Royal Society - that accompanies Bacon's philosophical thinking.

The fallen nature of man, the irrelevance of political structure for the Baconian model of scientific community, the elitist paradigm of its formation and the secrecy that assures the safety and progress of both science and civic society represent the basis for the development of the first scientific circles elaborating the new philosophy. Robert Boyle, the apologist of the experimental society and self-proclaimed follower of Baconian natural philosophy, founding member of the Royal Society, adopted a fallibilist conception of man's natural knowledge⁷². He adopted the Baconian view that the human mind must constantly free itself from deeply rooted errors and prejudices to be able to embark on the right path leading to true knowledge. He also embraced the practice of knowledge dissemination among natural philosophers. He constantly gathered only a limited number of people around him who were supposed to attest to the undertaken of experiments, a fact harshly criticized by Hobbes in his "Dialogus Physicus" in the 1660's. Boyle departed metaphysics from natural philosophy and proclaimed independency of the political disputes, while nevertheless hoping that the Royal Society would receive the promised funds from its president - King Charles II. Taking the image of the natural philosopher as a priest of a Baconian type several steps further, Boyle remained profoundly religious, almost at the brink of heresy.⁷³ Taken as a whole, the Royal Society may be regarded as resembling the closest to the model offered by its Lord Verulam in *New Atlantis*. In consequence, the Royal Society propagandists miss no chance to trumpet about the great Baconian legacy.⁷⁴

Conclusion

What I did in this paper was to compare two major works of the renaissance period that marked the history of western thought in order to show that although both may contain elements of utopian writing, one is definitely less utopian than the other. Since I chose to compare the work that heralded the genre - More's *Utopia* - to a work that was afterwards considered to be a scientific variant of its kind - Bacon's *New Atlantis* - I decided to additionally mark out the already existing contrast that sets the two literary creations apart. Adopting definitions of utopia and utopianism, indebted to More's account, from the literature, I took the most important fragments of More's work apart in order to analyze its overall thesis, and

to highlight its essential features. Thus, I followed the story line of *Utopia* and insisted on the extremely elaborate description of the daily routine of the Utopians.

I wanted to show that *Utopia* does embody an unabated criticism of the English society of the sixteenth century and more importantly that it embodies an ideal of societal order with two distinctive features: strict surveillance of man's private life and communitarian economy. At the bottom of the fictional construct lies a precise account of human nature - man as a rational being. As a result of man's presupposed rationality, More believes that renewal is possible in the appropriate institutional control. The mechanisms of such attempt, like the strict regulation and ordering to make the society rational, utilitarian and flawless despite the unalterable sinful nature of man are striking features of More's *Utopia*. Nevertheless, More expresses his doubts about the possibility of the implementation of an utopian law in a society like his own and fears that the principles of Utopia's legislation are much too improbable to be understood and to be willingly assumed by his European contemporaries.

In the second part of the paper, I emphasized that Bacon's attitude towards his project seems much more optimistic than More's doubtful one. Although he does not aim at perfecting man's morals, he redundantly claims that knowledge of nature is the only path to truth man is left with. Following the same strategy as in More's case, I deconstructed the text of *New Atlantis* to see whether totality and perfectness are the two essential features of the narrative as In More's text. I argued that *New Atlantis* depicts a society whose wellbeing is centered on a scientific circle. Bacon doesn't say much neither about social relationships – with few exceptions, like the patriarchal structure of the family and the high esteem citizens show towards marriage – nor about the political regime or institutional setting of the community. I argued that the reason for this is the lack of importance these features carry for the scope of Bacon's text: to outline a scientific programme which was to be followed by the new philosophers of nature, who opposed Aristotelianism and dogmatism in science. In addition, to support further my claim, I argued that the fact that Bacon's plan was indeed attempted to be taken over by the Royal Society stands as proof for the scientific core of *New Atlantis*.

To recall one of Davis's claims, either utopia sets limits to science or science undermines utopia. In this paper, I argue for the latter and I have shown that science defined as a constantly evolving practice and discipline is not congruent with definition of utopianism. A totalitarian political system characterized by systematic political control and constant surveillance of man's actions renders any attempt for new knowledge absurd, as there is nothing to discover in a society where everyone knows what's best and acts accordingly. Thus, Bacon's claim that science represents power partly challenges institutional control: it renders it insufficient and, offers it a secondary role in relation to science. Bacon does not entirely eradicate the importance of politics, but what *New Atlantis* emphasizes is

the highly beneficial effect of scientific practice on society in general, regardless of political allegiance or ideology.

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